

**Amendment to the Claims**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listing of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (currently amended) A method for allowing a predetermined access to at least a subset of a software application, the method comprising the steps of:

calculating an identifier based at least in part on a user geometry file;

generating an access key based at least in part on the identifier; and

validating the access key against a user data key and, on successful validation, granting the predetermined access to the at least a subset of the software application, thereby enabling operation of the software application with the user geometry file.

Claim 2 (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of executing an activation routine on unsuccessful validation.

Claim 3 (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the predetermined access comprises run permitted access.

Claim 4 (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the user geometry file comprises input data for the software application.

Claim 5 (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the identifier comprises a checksum based at least in part on a cyclic redundancy check.

Claim 6 (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the user geometry file includes at least one file characteristic.

Claim 7 (original) The method of claim 6 wherein the at least one file characteristic comprises at least one of an element count, a node count, a model name, and a match ratio.

Claim 8 (original) The method of claim 6 wherein the access key further comprises the at least one file characteristic.

Claim 9 (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the access key further comprises a software application signature.

Claim 10 (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the access key further comprises at least one system characteristic.

Claim 11 (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the access key is encrypted.

Claim 12 (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the access key has a limited validity lifetime.

Claim 13 (original) The method of claim 12 wherein the limited validity lifetime is determined at least in part by at least one of an elapsed time from access key generation, a number of access key validations, and a frequency of access key validations.

Claim 14 (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the user data key comprises a previously calculated result based at least in part on the user geometry file.

Claim 15 (currently amended) A method of creating a user data key for a software application, the method comprising the steps of:

- receiving an identifier based at least in part on a user geometry file;
- including the identifier in a fingerprint;
- encrypting the fingerprint; and
- associating the fingerprint with the software application as the user data key.

Claim 16 (currently amended) The method of claim 15 wherein the user geometry file comprises input data for the software application.

Claim 17 (original) The method of claim 15 wherein the identifier comprises a checksum based at least in part on a cyclic redundancy check.

Claim 18 (currently amended) The method of claim 15 wherein the user geometry file includes at least one file characteristic.

Claim 19 (original) The method of claim 18 wherein the at least one file characteristic comprises at least one of an element count, a node count, a model name, and a match ratio.

Claim 20 (original) The method of claim 18 wherein the fingerprint comprises the at least one file characteristic.

Claim 21 (original) The method of claim 15 wherein the fingerprint comprises a software application signature.

Claim 22 (original) The method of claim 15 wherein the fingerprint comprises at least one system characteristic.

Claim 23 (original) The method of claim 15 further comprising the step of receiving payment associated with the user data key.

Claim 24 (original) The method of claim 23 wherein the step of receiving payment comprises a credit card transaction.

Claim 25 (original) The method of claim 23 wherein the step of receiving payment comprises a coupon transaction.

Claim 26 (original) The method of claim 15 wherein the step of associating the fingerprint with the software application further comprises transmitting the fingerprint to the software application.

Claim 27 (original) The method of claim 26 wherein the user data key is included in a dynamic link library file.

Claim 28 (currently amended) A network enabled application software distribution method including the steps of:

providing a restricted use application software program;

loading the program onto a user's computer;

establishing communications between the user's computer and another computer;

uploading a fingerprint file from the user's computer to the other computer, wherein the fingerprint file is based at least in part on a user geometry file;

downloading a key file from the other computer to the user's computer; and

running the application software program on the user's computer with the user geometry file.

Claims 29-36 (cancelled)

Claim 37 (currently amended) A software access control apparatus comprising:

an identifier calculator in communication with a user geometry file;

an access key generator in communication with the identifier calculator; and

a validator in communication with the access key generator and a user data key.

Claim 38 (currently amended) A user data key generator comprising:

an identifier receiver, wherein the identifier is based at least in part on a user geometry file;

a fingerprint compiler in communication with the identifier receiver;

an encryption engine in communication with the fingerprint compiler; and

a transmitter in communication with the encryption engine and a software application.

Claims 39-45 (cancelled)

Claim 46 (new) The method of claim 1, wherein the software application comprises process simulation software.

Claim 47 (new) The method of claim 46, wherein the validating step comprises validating the access key against a user data key and, on successful validation, granting the predetermined access to the process simulation software, thereby enabling process simulation with the user geometry file.

Claim 48 (new) The method of claim 46 wherein the software application performs a simulation of an injection molding process.

Claim 49 (new) The method of claim 48, wherein the user geometry file corresponds to an injection molded component.

Claim 50 (new) The method of claim 49, wherein access to the process simulation software application is limited to simulations of the injection molded component corresponding to the user geometry file.